

Title: Footsteps in the Snow: The Paradigm of the *Svatováclavská Tradice*

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On the brink of WWII and his own impending death, Karel Čapek remembers another bleak winter during WWI in his final essay “Svatý Václav.” Sitting in a church he hears the song “Svatý Václave, vevodo české země.” The song brought a flicker of hope to Čapek as he sat in that church. It is this hope that Čapek remembers and shares in his essay. Čapek discerns two distinct traditions with origins in Václav. First is the historical Václav of museums and textbooks. However, there is also a tradition that is “posvěcené uměním.” Čapek argues that traces, or tracks, of what he calls the *svatováclavská tradice* can be found throughout Czech literature. This tradition inspires Čapek’s hope and provides the impetus for my paper.

The aim of this paper is to understand how the *svatováclavská tradice* binds traces of itself together across boundaries of time and form. In addition to Čapek’s essay, this paper will also look at some of the most significant works of this *tradice* (for example, the 12th century hymn “Svatý Václave” and the 19th century stories of Jan Neruda and Alois Jirásek). Despite the variety of form and content there is clear cohesion within the *tradice*, which causes a striking resemblance to genre. But rather than being a means to the end of the paper, the concept of genre I employ serves as a productive stumbling block needed to reveal the relationship between these individual works and the *tradice* to which they belong. Rather than creating oppositions between these works and the *tradice* or genre and *tradice*, this paper seeks to explore the tensions that exist and form the relationships between the two of them. Agamben’s description of paradigm as “depolar and not dichotomic, it is tensional and not oppositional,” provides a means to uncover the nature of these tensional relationships. It is the idea of the paradigm, this paper argues, that can explain how the *svatováclavská tradice* is able to separate itself from its progenitor, but still be recognizable to Čapek as he sits in that church.

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